

REMARKS

The Pending Claims

Claims 1-10 are currently pending in the application. Claims 1-6 are directed to an off-press plate-making apparatus comprising means for applying on a substrate a uniform image-recording layer which is capable of forming a lithographic image upon exposure to heat or light and optional processing; and means for removing the lithographic image from the substrate. Claim 7-10 are directed to a printing system comprising a lithographic printing press and an off-press plate-making apparatus.

Summary of the Office Action

The disclosure stands objected to in view of informalities cited by the Office. Further, claims 1-10 were objected to under 37 C.F.R. § 1.75(a) as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter regarded as the invention. Claims 1-10 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as alleged anticipated by Vermeersch et al. (EP 802,457). Claims 5 and 6 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Vermeersch et al. in view of Barnett et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,308,746). Claims 7 and 8 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Vermeersch et al. in view of Koguchi et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,082,263). Claims 9 and 10 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Vermeersch et al. in view of Koguchi et al. and further in view of Rombult et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,085,657).

Discussion of the Objections to the Disclosure

In view of the amendment to the specification, the objection is considered moot. As such, withdrawal of the objections is respectfully requested.

Discussion of the Indefiniteness Objections

In view of the amendments as set forth above, the objections under 37 C.F.R. § 1.75(a) are considered moot. Therefore, withdrawal of these objections is respectfully requested.

Discussion of the Anticipation and Obviousness Rejections

The rejection of claims 1-10 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) over the disclosure of Vermeersch et al. is considered improper, and withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully

requested. Vermeersch et al. simply fails to teach or fairly suggest all of the limitations of claims 1-10, and therefore does not render the claimed invention obvious.

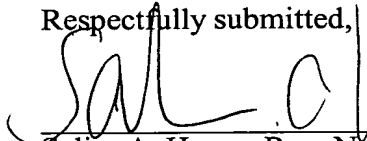
Vermeersch is directed to a method for making a lithographic printing member. Applicants agree that Vermeersch et al. teaches a means for applying an image recording layer on a substrate and a means for removing the image from the substrate. However, Applicants disagree with the Office that Vermeersch et al. discloses an off-press plate-making device comprising means for applying on a substrate an uniform image-recording layer and *off-press* means for removing the image as defined in claim 1 of the present invention. The Office's reliance on col. 5, lines 3-11 to support the claim of anticipation is misplaced. The cited portion of the specification discloses an embodiment wherein the *image formation* (*i.e.*, the coating and exposure step) is optionally performed off-press. What is *not* disclosed, however, is an *off-press* means for *removing* the image. Instead, Vermeersch et al. state that a device for cleaning the plate (*i.e.* erasing the image) is necessarily located near the printing plate (see, col. 6, lines 16-20); however, this does not imply that the cleaning device is located off- or on-press. According to the present invention, an "off-press" cleaning apparatus is an apparatus that is not integrated in the printing press but located nearby the printing press so that a printing master can be cleaned while the press is printing (see, page 6, lines 13-16 and page 7, lines 23-26). On the other hand, the whole teaching by Vermeersch et al. is especially focused on on-press operations. As such, Vermeersch et al. cannot be said to teach or fairly suggest the present invention.

The secondary references (*i.e.*, Barnett et al., Koguchi et al., and Rombult et al.) cited by the Office fail to provide any teaching or suggestion of an off-press means for removing the image as defined in claim 1 of the present application. As such, in view of the failure of the secondary references to remedy the deficiencies of Vermeersch et al. to teach or fairly suggest the claimed invention as discussed above, Applicants respectfully request the rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103 (a) of claims 5-10 be withdrawn.

Conclusion

The application is considered in good and proper form for allowance, and the Examiner is respectfully requested to pass this application to issue. If, in the opinion of the Examiner, a telephone conference would expedite the prosecution of the subject application, the Examiner is invited to call the undersigned attorney.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Salim A. Hasan", is written over a horizontal line.

Salim A. Hasan, Reg. No. 38,175
LEYDIG, VOIT & MAYER, LTD.
Two Prudential Plaza, Suite 4900
180 North Stetson
Chicago, Illinois 60601-6780
(312) 616-5600 (telephone)
(312) 616-5700 (facsimile)

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